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## Three Carnival Tents



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### Chapter 1 by Luna

The day that my sister Juliet and I snuck into an abandoned amusement park was the worst decision of my life. Want to hear more, get cozy, but be warned: you may not sleep well tonight. It was drizzling rain outside and Juliet, Carson (my best friend), and I were wandering around. My mom and dad don't care what we do, they just want us home safely with all our fingers and toes attached. Every smart person in town was either inside eating dinner with their family or was sitting by the fire place, getting warm. They may as well do both.

Anyway, we were planning to head to the park to play soccer when dark clouds covered the sun. We still wanted to go to the park though.

It turns out they had closed the main road that leads to the park due to a car accident, so we had to find a shortcut. I was not turning back now, mainly because we were about a mile away from the house and my cell phone had died a few minutes ago while sitting in my pocket all day.

We found a wide gap in a fence and decided to crawl through to see where it leads. Juliet complains that she gets a cut on her arm since she practically dragged her arm against the old fence. Carson is bouncing on his heels as I crawl through the gap, shoving the dirty soccer ball through with one arm.

"Jax, you've got to see this." Carson says in awe.

When I stand up, brushing dirt off my jeans, I look up. It's an abandoned amusement park. Juliet, who's just a year younger than me, is looking up at everything, with her brown braids flying everywhere.

"Calm down," I tell my sister.

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"Come on Jax, we got to go exploring. This is going to be way better than playing soccer." says Carson.

"Come on Jax. Listen to Carson. He's right for once. We can't just go yet." Juliet begs.

"I'm right for once? Juliet, I'm always right." Carson says.

"Enough! We'll stay for one hour, but that's it." I tell my accomplices.

"Thanks Jax! You're the best big brother ever!" shouts Juliet, hugging me.

Even though she's twelve and can be pretty annoying, I've got to love my sister.

"Look there's a dunk booth!" Carson shouts. He sprints off to a distant part of the park. he already seems to know this place.

"Wait up!" I shout. I run after him, Juliet trying to catch up with me. I can be a pretty fast runner. I skid to a stop, with Juliet almost knocking me over.

Carson is now climbing onto the wooden chair that holds the person that gets dunked.

"Jax! Throw this at the target!" He shouts.

He tosses me a few old, motheaten beanbags. The chair he sits on looks like it's going to break any minute now.

I lightly toss one of the beanbags towards the target. It hits it, the target moving back slightly, but the chair doesn't move.

"Come on Jax! Throw it harder! I know you can pitch a mean baseball." shouts Carson from the red, chipped chair.

I toss it a little harder. The chair still doesn't move.

"Harder Jax! You throw like a woman!" my friend shouts.

"Hey!" my sister cries in protest.

If he wants a hard throw, I'll give him a hard throw. I think.

I throw the last beanbag with all of my might. The target swings back as far as it can and I hear Carson yell. The wooden chair breaks into dozens of pieces and he falls to the hard cement ground.

"Ow. Not that hard." he says, examining a small cut on his elbow.

"That's it. We're leaving." I say. We are going to get killed in this place.

"Oh Jax, just one more minute." my sister begs.

"No!" says Carson, climbing out of the chair. "I'll go inside one of those tents."

"No, I say

"Please Jax. You never let me do anything. Juliet can't help

"Come on bro, what harm is there in going to the dunk booth?" I ask.

Harmless? I don't think so, but I didn't know that yet.

"Fine! But I get to go in first." I say.

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We walk over to one of the tents. There is an image of a crystal ball at the top.

"They probably told you the future when you walk into one of these." I tell my sister.

"I want to know about my future! I'm probably going to be rich and have a swimming pool and..." my sister says

Carson sits down on a nearby bench as I pull back one of tent flaps. To my surprise, someone is actually in there. A woman with long, frizzy black hair and brown eyes wearing the clothes of a gypsy, sitting in a red velvet seat.

"Come in, come in children." the woman says.

Children? I then notice my sister, clutching one of my pant legs.

I stumble inside, since it's really hard to walk with my sister clutching me.

"My name is Madame Nagisa and I can tell you about your future." the gypsy says, smiling. "Now who would like to go first?"

"Jax! Jax! Can I go first?" my sister pleads.

"Sure." I tell Juliet.

My sister sits in a worn, polished wooden chair, her eyes glittering.

The crystal ball on the table starts to glow brightly as Madame Nagisa closes her eyes.

"I see...I see you growing up, falling in love..." she whispers.

All of the sudden, the crystal ball goes black, but it doesn't go back to its normal, pearly white state.

"Oh no..." the gypsy whispers.

"What's wrong?" my sister asks.

"When the crystal ball goes black, that means that something terrible will happen." Madame Nagisa says.

"Will I die?" Juliet asks, tears forming in her eyes.

"I don't know." says the gypsy woman.

Juliet stands up, pushing the chair towards the table. She then exits the tent, now sobbing.

"Why did you tell her that?" I ask the gypsy.

"I didn't intend to frighten her. It is only what the crystal ball shows me. Your sister wanted to know, so I told her." Madame Nagisa says.

"..."

"If you say so," she replies.

I pull out the chair, the red table cloth moving silently.

The black crystal ball starts

"I see you exploring the carnival, but your friend shares a little frightened of the secrets that lie here at this amusement park," she says.

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The light from the crystal ball fades, going back to a pearly white ball.

"What?" I ask the gypsy, but she is nowhere to be seen.

She was just sitting in front of me a moment ago!

I walk back outside, Carson comforting a crying Juliet.

"The lady scared me," she bawls. "I thought amusement parks were supposed to be fun."

"What happened in there?" Carson asks.

"The weird gypsy lady in there was just messing with her. She'll be alright." I say assuringly.

"There really was someone in there?" my friend asks.

"Yeah. Why?"

"I want to check this out," says Carson, walking towards the gypsy's tent.

He walks inside, pulling the tent flap closed. Then he screams. Loudly.

I rush over, leaving my crying sister on the bench by herself.

Carson walks out of the tent pale white, shivering.

"Why...why did you do this to me?" my friend whispers.

"What's wrong?" I ask

"What's wrong? Oh I don't know... it's just that there's a skeleton in there filled with dead rats and flies!" Carson screams, tears streaked down his face.

I walk back over to the tent and open the flap. I peek inside. The gypsy smiles and waves.

I squint my eyes. That's when I see what Carson saw.

There's a skeleton with the same long black hair and bandana. Dead rats lie at my feet, live ones running around. There are swarms of flies around my face.

"Holy sh..." I say, walking out of the tent. Juliet stares at me. I'm not that stupid to actually swear in front of my little sister.

"You were right." I tell Carson. He smiles a little.

"Told you," he whispers, dirty blond hair falling in front of his face.

"I'm going into this one." I tell the others.

"We should go now Jax," says Carson.

"I want to explore the other tents though," I say.

"At first I thought you wanted to leave, but now you want to stay?" my friend asks. "Your crazy."

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What is the name of this place anyways?

I walk over to the next tent and walk inside. The tent is light blue with the outline of a head. A girl about my age sits on the ground, legs folded and eyes closed. She has a blond bob and fair skin. Her eyes then flutter open, her eyes as blue as seaglass.

"Hello. My name is Luna. What is yours?"

"Jax."

"Nice to meet you Jaxon Seville." she says, smiling.

How did she...

"How did I know? I can read minds." Luna says, eyes closed.

"Really?" I hear a voice ask. Juliet is standing behind me.

"Really." Luna says, sharing a shy smile with my sister.

"Hey, do you know anything about this place before it shut down?" I ask.

"No...but the guy in the next tent probably know or you could go back and ask Madame Nagisa." she says.

"Thanks for the..." I start.

"Help?" Luna finishes.

We exchange an uneasy look. I squint my eyes. In Luna's place I see a skeleton with the same bob of blond hair. A raven pecks at the skeleton's forehead. The bird looks at me with its glimmering eyes. I stop squinting.

I exit the tent with Juliet on my trail while Luna just stares with an uneasy smile on her face.

"Goodbye." Luna calls out.

Carson has calmed down a bit and is now playing a game on his cell phone.

"How was the tent? And don't ask me to go inside. Just tell me what really lies there." he says, not looking up from his phone.

"Good. If you went inside, you would find the skeleton of a girl with a raven pecking at its forehead." I report.

"Sounds a little less scary than the gypsy tent." says Carson, now looking up.

"I really just want to find out what happened to this place. I just want to go to one more tent and then we'll go home. Okay?"

"Sure. I'll just stay here." says Carson, returning to his game.

The last tent was all the way at the end of the row. I saw an abandoned ferris wheel and merry-go-round. I imagine people having fun on the rides.

"Welcome!" A voice booms. I look up. A giant, painted wooden eye at the top.

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As I walk inside, Juliet following, I see a man. He wears a brown suit and has a top hat on. Objects are flying everywhere. Some are zipping around, flying at about a hundred miles an hour, while others just float in place.

"Good evening sir and madame," says the man, winking at Juliet. She giggles. "I really hope you do enjoy the decor." I think he means the objects flying around.

"I think your telekinetic." I says, doubting myself.

"Right you are boy. And what is your name?" the man asks my sister.

"Juliet." she says

"Marvelous name for a little girl." he says. A faint blue light surrounds my sister as she floats off the ground. She squeals with delight.

"Look Jax! I can fly!" she shouts, zooming outside of the tent.

"Wait up!" I shout.

I watch her as she flies over to Carson. I follow her and notice that the man trails behind.

Carson looks up to see my flying sister.

"Just like Peter Pan!" he shouts, my sister laughing.

I see Luna and Madame Nagisa coming out of their tents. Carson doesn't seem to notice.

"It's time." they all say in unison.

The world lurches. I feel a cold hand on my shoulder.

"Carson are you..." I say

"Okay." Juliet finishes, smiling wickedly.

In Carson's place lies a skeleton, wearing his clothes and holding his phone.

"!^#\$ you!" I scream at the top of my lungs.

Then I hear a loud thud. I turn around to see a skeleton with Juliet's brown braids, lying on the ground. The blue light that used to be around her has disappeared.

"What have you..."

"Done?" Luna finishes. "I'm showing you the real world. I'm doing you a favor. You know...you're actually dead too. Life on Earth ended a really long time ago. It's all a mirage. Don't worry, your friend and your sister will be back any moment now."

And with that, the three disappear. Then, the world gets brighter. I see the park, filled with light

and excited children. Parents wander around, chatting, eating, going on rides. It's not real. None of this. I run into a funhouse. I look around and see a skeleton, wearing my clothes and grinning.

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